

## Senator Harkin: Author of Landmark Food, Agriculture, and Energy Policies

---

*“By putting \$22 billion into expanded conservation programs over a decade, the farm bill could become the most sweeping environmental legislation since the Clean Air Act of 1990.”*

*– The New York Times, February 14, 2002 on passage of the Harkin-led Senate version of the farm bill*

---

For nearly forty years, Senator Tom Harkin has fought to protect and promote Iowa agriculture as a senior member and longtime chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Throughout his tenure, Harkin has steadfastly advocated the interests of family farmers, rural communities, and consumers in adopting comprehensive and forward-looking national food, agriculture, and rural policies. As Chairman, he was the Senate leader in crafting and enacting two groundbreaking farm bills in 2002 and 2008. The Harkin-led farm bills strengthened farm income protection while significantly broadening the legislation’s focus through initiatives and investments that promote agricultural conservation, nutrition assistance and healthier diets, farm and rural renewable energy, and energy efficiency. From his first day in Congress, through the farm crisis of the 1980s, to the 2014 farm bill, Harkin has been a strong voice for better opportunities and quality of life for farm families and all rural Americans. **Among the highlights of Harkin’s work to provide better opportunities and improve quality of life for farm families and all rural Americans:**

### **Protecting Farmers and Ranchers in Response to the Farm Crisis:**

- Harkin’s outspoken advocacy for dramatic changes in federal farm commodity and income and price support programs helped to push Congress to enact the 1985 farm bill, the *Food Security Act*, over the objections of the Reagan administration. The bill did far more to respond to the crisis, which had caused land values to drop by a third nationally and was leading to as many as 500 farm auctions a month in Iowa, than it would have without Harkin’s efforts.
- The landmark *Agricultural Credit Act of 1987* included key Harkin policy proposals: the restructuring and write-offs of debt owed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), ensuring the rights and fair treatment of borrowers, providing for reduced interest rates, and supporting state mediation programs to help resolve debt problems.

### **Strengthening and Expanding Conservation Practices in Rural America:**

- Throughout his service in Congress, Harkin has been a leading voice in calling for increased federal support and assistance for sound agricultural stewardship and conservation of natural resources. He worked to successfully strengthen the full range of USDA conservation assistance for farmers and ranchers across the nation.
- As a result of his efforts, the 2002 farm bill, the *Farm Security and Rural Investment Act*, increased overall conservation funding by an estimated \$17.1 billion to a total of some \$38.5 billion, an 80-percent increase **above the previously-existing level**.
- In the 2008 farm bill, the *Food, Conservation, and Energy Act*, Harkin achieved a further overall increase in conservation funding. His leadership in the 2002 and 2008 farm bills thus dedicated a combined total of some \$22.4 billion in additional federal conservation investments that have helped Iowans reduce soil erosion, protect and improve water quality, restore wetlands and other environmentally sensitive land, and improve wildlife habitats.

#### *The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)*

- Harkin’s signature accomplishment is the [CSP](#). Included in the 2002 farm bill, the CSP is a voluntary incentive-based program of payments to farmers and ranchers for adopting and maintaining sound environmental and stewardship practices on land in production — compensating for costs incurred and income forgone, as well as for the environmental benefits they produce.
- The CSP has enrolled almost 60 million acres of land across the nation, and returned \$3.4 billion in payments. **In Iowa, 1.8 million acres are enrolled in the program that has returned \$258 million in conservation payments.**

#### *Additional Conservation Programs*

- ***The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):*** Harkin authored and included in the 1990 farm bill the Agricultural Water Quality Initiative (WQIP), which was combined with a number of other programs to create [EQIP](#) in the 1996 farm bill, providing incentives and cost-share payments for crop and livestock producers who adopt practices to carry out a variety of conservation and environmental practices. During the 2002 farm bill, Harkin increased funding for the program by \$11 billion. Harkin’s leadership increased funding in the 2008 farm bill by an additional \$3.4 billion.
- ***Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):*** The 2002 farm bill included a \$1.5 billion investment for the [CRP](#), and enrolled 39.2 million acres of sensitive land to grass, trees, and wildlife habitats across the country into the program.

- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP):** During the 2002 farm bill, Harkin doubled the amount of acres in the [WRP](#) to protect and restore wetlands on private lands. Between the 2002 and 2008 farm bills, \$3.8 billion has been invested in the WRP.

#### **Investing in Farm Income Protection and Commodity Programs:**

- The 2002 farm bill re-established a program of countercyclical income protection payments to help farmers withstand periods of low commodity prices. Such payments decline as commodity prices rise and then cease once they reach or exceed a specific target price.
- The 2008 farm bill adopted the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program to offer farmers protection against losses of revenue instead of only against declines in commodity prices. ACRE is the forerunner of the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program — enacted in the 2014 farm bill, which eliminated direct payments.

#### **Developing Efficient, Renewable Energy Resources for the Future:**

- Under Harkin's leadership, the [2002 farm bill was the first farm bill to include an energy title](#) — a source of innovative policies intended to develop and promote the use of biofuels, biobased products, renewable energy, and energy efficient programs.
- In particular, the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), established by Harkin in the 2002 farm bill, assists farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses in developing renewable energy systems and in making energy efficient improvements in their operations. REAP has invested more than \$725 million to support over 10,000 cost-shared projects nationwide.
- Harkin joined former Senator Lugar to introduce the *Biomass Research and Development Act of 2000*, a bill to put biofuels from non-grain feed stocks such as crop residues, switch grass, and woody materials into production. Harkin used the energy title of the farm bill in both 2002 and 2008 to extend this program to support research and development of advanced biofuels and biobased products.
- Harkin included the Biorefinery Assistance Program in the energy title of both the 2002 and 2008 farm bills to support construction of biorefineries for advanced biofuels in rural communities.
- Overall, between 2002 and 2014, these energy title programs have provided more than \$2.4 billion for energy-related projects that increase energy efficiency, reduce American dependence on foreign oil, and develop renewable energy sources in rural America.

#### **Increasing Usage of Biofuels to Reduce Dependency on Energy Imports:**

- Harkin has been a national leader in promoting the development of domestic, renewable biofuels to displace petroleum imports.
- Harkin co-sponsored an amendment to the *Clean Air Act of 1990* that required the use of oxygenated fuels such as ethanol-blended gasoline to reduce toxic automobile emissions.
- Harkin sponsored legislation that eliminated federal fuel taxes on gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol.
- Harkin partnered with former Senator Dick Lugar (R-IN) to create the Renewable Fuel Standard in the 2005 *Energy Policy Act* that was expanded in 2007 under the *Energy Independence and Security Act*. The RFS continues to be a critical policy for limiting oil imports and reducing air pollution by requiring an increasing use of biofuels in our transportation sector.
- As a result of these initiatives, the United States has decreased petroleum imports by 25 percent in recent years — the equivalent of displacing our oil imports from Iraq, Kuwait, and Mexico combined.

#### **Promoting Wind Energy Initiatives in Iowa:**

- Harkin helped to enact the Production Tax Credit for wind power in 1992 which is largely credited with the growth of wind energy in Iowa. Today, Iowa derives more than 25 percent of its electricity from wind, and is home to 15 wind power manufacturing facilities that support 7,000 jobs in the state.

For more information, please visit Senator Harkin's website at <http://harkin.senate.gov/>, or follow him on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/tomharkin> or Twitter <https://twitter.com/SenatorHarkin>.